

**AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as indicated hereinafter.

1. (previously presented) A method comprising:
  - receiving, at a merge utility executing on a computer system, a first merge document that is in a merge format;
  - converting a second document from an original format to the merge format to create a second merge document;
  - wherein the second document was created by a first document authoring application;
  - wherein the second merge document is in the merge format;
  - wherein the step of converting is performed by either the merge utility or the first document authoring application;
  - using the merge utility executing on the computer system, merging the first merge document and the second merge document to generate a composite merge document; and
  - after generating the composite merge document, delivering said composite merge document to an output device;
  - wherein the output device is a device that is different from the computer system;
  - wherein the original format is a format that is not supported by the output device, and therefore needs to be converted to another format that is supported by the output device in order to be properly interpreted by the output device; and
  - wherein the merge format is a format that is supported by the output device, and therefore does not need to be converted to another format that is supported by the output device in order to be properly interpreted by the output device.
2. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
  - generating the first merge document in said merge format by converting a first original document from an original format to the merge format.

3. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the merge format is Standard Printing and Imaging Format (SPIF).
4. (original) The method of Claim 3, wherein the merge format is PDL Postscript.
5. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the first document is a background template document and the second document is an overlay document.
6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 5,  
    wherein the background template document is originally created by a second document  
        authoring application; and  
    wherein the second document authoring application is different from said first document  
        authoring application.
7. (original) The method of Claim 5, wherein the background template document is created in a second original format and converted from the second original format to the merge format.
8. (previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the conversion of the second original document to the merge format occurs at the merge utility.
9. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the converting of the second document from the original format to the merge format to create the second merge document includes:  
    generating, based on the original format, a set of conversion instructions to convert the  
        second document into said second merge document;  
    passing the set of conversion instructions from the merge utility to the first document  
        authoring application; and  
    the first document authoring application generating the second merge document based on  
        said set of conversion instructions.
10. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the method further comprises receiving, at the merge utility, a request to merge documents, the request containing information

about the first document authoring application, wherein the converting of the second document from the original format to the merge format to create the second merge document includes:

- generating, based on the information about the first document authoring application, a set of conversion instructions to convert the second document into said second merge document;
- passing the set of conversion instructions from the merge utility to the first document authoring application; and
- the first document authoring application generating the second merge document based on said set of conversion instructions.

11. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the composite merge document is in the merge format.

12. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the composite merge document is a template for creating other documents.

13. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

- receiving, at the merge utility, a request to merge documents;
- wherein the steps of converting the second document and merging the first merge document and the second merge document are both performed in response to the merge utility receiving the request to merge documents.

14. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

- receiving, at the merge utility, a request to merge documents;
- generating the first merge document in said merge format by converting a first original document from an original format to the merge format;
- wherein the merge format is Standard Printing and Imaging Format (SPIF);
- wherein the first document is a background template document and the second document is an overlay document;
- wherein the background template document is originally created by a second document authoring application; and

wherein the second document authoring application is different from said first document authoring application;

wherein the background template document is created in a second original format and converted from the second original format to the merge format.

15. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 1.

16. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 2.

17. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 3.

18. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 4.

19. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 5.

20. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 6.

21. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 7.

22. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 8.

23. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 9.

24. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 10.

25. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 11.

26. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 12.

27. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 13.

28. (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 14.

29. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the first merge document is a version of a first document that has been converted from an original format to the merge format.

30. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein the merge utility performs the step of converting a second document from an original format to the merge format to create a second merge

document by causing the first document authoring application to convert the second document to to said second merge document.

31. (New) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 29.

32. (New) A machine-readable storage medium storing one or more sequences of instructions, which when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the method recited in Claim 30.